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July 30, 2003

TO: ITF Members

FROM: Jim Fox, Special Assistant to the Director

SUBJECT: Lead Entity Strategies

The SRFB, the Board's Technical Panel, and WDFW have required lead entities to develop strategic approaches to identifying and prioritizing habitat protection and restoration projects. This is also a requirement of the Salmon Recovery Act passed by the Legislature in 1998 and amended in 1999. In the Act, the strategic approach is embedded in the concepts of limiting factors analysis, critical pathways methodology, habitat work schedules, and habitat project lists. However, some lead entities are not clear about the SRFB's and Technical Panel's expectations and as a result have asked for more guidance on what strategies should include and how they should be used. In addition, some lead entities are unclear how their strategies relate to regional salmon recovery planning.

At the April 2002 Lead Entity Workshop held in Wenatchee, participants identified twelve questions that a lead entity strategy should address (Attachment I). At the May 2003 workshop in SeaTac, participants had the opportunity to comment on a proposed strategy outline developed by the workshop steering committee. The policy questions listed below are based on those comments. SRFB and WDFW staff[*] have revised the outline based on these workshops and comments directed at the Board. This revised outline is presented here (Attachment II) as a starting point for ITF discussion.

Policy questions

The following policy questions are also based on comments from the 2003 Lead Entity Workshop and also from comments at the May 1 and 2 SRFB meeting. These questions are offered as a starting point for ITF discussions.

[*] Brian Walsh, Kristi Lynette, and Margen Carlson, WDFW; Carole Richmond, Rollie Geppert and Jim Fox, IAC/SRFB.

1. What is an acceptable working definition of a lead entity "strategy?" (See below for a proposed definition)
2. How much can be expected from lead entity strategies? Lead entities have different levels of information about their watershed(s), varying degrees of technical and staff support, and different financial resources. In addition, some lead entities have had years of experience in salmon habitat recovery efforts and community engagement, while newer lead entities have had limited experience. How do the Technical Panel and SRFB take into consideration these differences when evaluating lead entity strategies and proposed projects?
3. How should strategies address ESA-listed species? Non-listed specie? Multiple listed species? (How should SRFB address non-listed species? Statute states that the SRFB shall "give preference to projects that… will benefit listed species and other fish species." SRFB policy currently states that the board will "give the greatest preference to lead entity strategies and project lists that benefit salmonid populations that are listed under the Endangered Species Act.")
4. The strategy outline presented at the workshop in May 2003 did not address project evaluation criteria. Specific habitat projects should not only address priority actions in priority locations in the watershed, but they should provide significant benefits to salmon, be cost-effective, etc. How does the strategy provide guidance for evaluating, rating, and ranking individual projects? For example, a strategy may show preference for restoration over acquisition projects or perhaps a preference for projects that can show early signs of success in order to garner community support for subsequent projects.
5. Should development of project evaluation criteria be left completely up to the lead entity, or should there be guidance from the SRFB. For example, it has been suggested that all lead entities should evaluate projects based on benefits to salmon, certainty, cost-effectiveness, fit to the strategy, and socio-economic benefits, but that the details of how to do this be left to the lead entity.
6. Should the strategy address "opportunistic" projects? Is it possible that an unanticipated project may emerge that has acceptable biological benefits and exceptional social value but is not in a priority area of the watershed? Should the strategy provide guidance on how to rank such a project high on the lead entity project list?
7. Projects that are part of a portfolio that is aimed at restoration of a watershed *process* may lie outside priority areas of the watershed, even though the watershed process being targeted is important to the priority area. How should these projects be considered?
8. Should the lead entity strategy and the project evaluation criteria take into consideration existing land use regulations and practices? A strategy example: An area of the watershed that has been prioritized for protection may already be subject to land use regulations that are adequate to protect the resources identified in the strategy. A project example: A barrier removal project may open

up several miles of habitat, but the newly-accessible habitat may have insufficient land use regulations to protect it from being degraded. .

9. What is the role of the Technical Panel in evaluating lead entity strategies and communicating the results of these evaluations to the lead entities? The SRFB? At what point in the grant cycle should this occur? How will the Technical Panel use it in project evaluation?
10. The strategy outline presented at the workshop did not address how to identify and prioritize data gaps. However, in the Fourth Grant Round the SRFB funded assessments that are necessary to fill a data gap identified as a priority in a lead entity strategy. What criteria would the lead entity use to identify and prioritize data gaps?
11. Are the twelve questions identified in the 2002 workshop still valid? (See Attachment I) What changes are needed?
12. As more data are obtained for a given watershed and more powerful analytical tools become available, strategies may evolve to a more systemic approach, addressing habitat functions and processes in addition to habitat conditions and fish lifecycle stages. This will be especially important when there are multiple salmonid species that are being addressed. Is there a risk that the type of strategy proposed at the workshop will become obsolete, or can it be designed to move towards a more systemic approach?
13. Should the SRFB recognize EDT as an appropriate analytical tool to be used in strategy development and project prioritization?
14. If a lead entity has high quality information about the watershed, advanced analytical tools, a good strategy, and uses the strategy effectively, should the lead entity be “rewarded?” How? When?
15. Should lead entity strategies be useful for more than SRFB project prioritization? (See the first section of Attachment II).

Proposed definition of “lead entity strategy”

The word strategy comes from the Greek "*strategos*" which literally means "generalship." There are numerous definitions from the worlds of the military, business, planning, and behavioral biology. One general definition of “strategy” that seems applicable is:

“An action plan for achieving a goal.”

The following definition of “lead entity strategy” is offered for discussion purposes:

> *“A lead entity strategy is a habitat protection and restoration action plan for the watershed(s) within the lead entity area. It provides a stepwise approach to how, where, and when to take action to restore and protect habitat and the watershed processes that are necessary to support*

salmon. It takes into consideration current knowledge and understanding of biological, physical, chemical, and ecological factors as well as community social, economic and cultural values and goals. The strategy provides guidance for specific actions over time and space in pursuit of established goals and desired outcomes."

Attachment I

Questions to Guide Lead Entity Strategy Development

1. What are your vision (10-30 years out) and short and long-term goals for your watershed in relation to salmon habitat recovery? What is the gap between current and desired conditions?
2. What is your definition of recovery and how does it relate to the State and Federal definitions?
3. What is your conceptual approach or recovery philosophy and why did you choose it? (e.g. refugia/landscape ecology, worst first/triage, start where there's greatest support, etc.)
4. What are your high priority stocks, geographical areas, and actions? What process and criteria did you use to determine them?
5. What segments of the community and stakeholder groups were or need to be involved in developing your strategy?
6. What are the social, economic forces and scientific knowledge that limit or support your vision and goals? How will you address limiting forces and strengthen supportive forces, where needed? How will you address and integrate socio-economic and scientific factors?
7. What are the technical and citizen's groups' roles in your strategy?
8. How will you foster and encourage project sponsors to participate in your high priority actions?
9. How does your strategy integrate with other existing policies, programs and regulations that can have a significant effect on salmon recovery?
10. What tools and resources did you/will you use to help implement your strategy? (e.g. GIS, habitat biology, senior planner, web specialist, etc.)
11. How will you measure progress and success? What are your measurement criteria?
12. How will you use your strategy beyond soliciting SRFB funding?

Attachment II

Strategies to Projects: *Building a Common Understanding*

DEVELOPING FOCUSED LEAD ENTITY STRATEGIES

Primary Purposes for Lead Entity Strategies:

- Guides project selection and ranking for SRFB funding;
- Guides project selection for funding other than SRFB (e.g. NFWF);
- A guide for spending mitigation funds resulting from environmental permitting.
- Documents the scientific and community stakeholder priorities for restoration and protection of salmon habitat;
- Contributes to the habitat restoration and protection (non-regulatory) component of a regional salmon recovery plan;
- Contributes to the salmon habitat component of a sub-basin plan;
- Communicates to non-technical people, as well as project sponsors and community stakeholders the LE plan for salmon habitat protection and restoration.
- Informs the Habitat Work Schedule, which is required by RCW 77.85.060.

Elements of a Strategic Approach for LE Strategies

- Answers the question: With time constraints, resource constraints and financial constraints, what would you do next?
- Integrates biological information about the most important areas for benefiting specific salmon stocks with stakeholder needs/priorities in a collaborative process.
  - Prioritizing is a social endeavor, while science provides the information to help stakeholders decide on priorities.
- Identifies a small portion of the watershed for focused efforts.
- Includes a rationale for priorities.
- Identifies the personnel and monetary resources necessary to implement actions identified in the strategy.
- Includes a time frame for implementation that is consistent with available resources.

The elements outlined in the "Sample Core Strategy Outline" describe the LE strategy components for meeting Tech Panel and SRFB expectations. It is recognized, however,

that Lead Entity strategies have additional elements as described by the twelve questions developed at last year's workshop as well as elements unique to particular watersheds. Furthermore, many of the answers to the twelve questions may be components for regional or sub-basin plans. The intent is not to re-write strategies per se, but to move toward a greater level of specificity in question four (of the twelve questions), namely "What are your high priority stocks, geographical areas and actions?" For Tech Panel evaluation purposes, specify the chapter of your strategy that contains the elements recommended in this sample outline.

The Potential Benefits of Focused Strategies

- Provides a consistent, defensible approach for addressing the needs of multiple forums (e.g. regional salmon recovery planning, agency mitigation, GMA, etc.).
- Provides more certainty that projects coming from a prioritized list of actions have a higher likelihood of receiving high ratings by the SRFB Technical Panel.
- Could provide the necessary assurances for SRFB targeted funding allocations.
- Provides objectives[1] to monitor progress.
- Focuses actions to maximize the use of limited personnel (such as project sponsors and technical advisors) and financial resources

Example Process for Developing Strategic Approach

- Combine local technical and citizen representatives to work together to develop the core strategy (number 4 of the 12 LE questions).
- Review existing information about your watershed (e.g. LFA, watershed analyses, EDT, or past projects).
- Use maps to talk about specific areas, not in the abstract or generalities.
- To the best of your ability, follow the steps outlined in the attached Sample Core Strategy Outline.
- Summarize your core strategy in a table and on a map.
- Identify and select projects within your strategy's priorities. Projects outside the listed priorities (i.e. to take advantage of rare, unique opportunities) should be rare and require in the project application a defensible rationale in relation to your previously stated priorities.

[1] Objectives are *measurable, temporal, and spatial* in reference.

Sample Core Strategy Outline

It is recognized that lead entities have different levels of information about their watershed(s), varying degrees of technical and staff support, and different financial resources. In addition, some lead entities have had years of experience in salmon habitat recovery efforts and community engagement, while newer lead entities have had limited experience. Regardless of these differences, lead entities should strive to base decisions on the best available information about the watershed(s), sound technical assistance, use of analytical tools, and stakeholder input.

1. Prioritize the salmonid stocks in your watershed and, if possible, develop recovery goals for those stocks. This is an endeavor based upon policy guided by stakeholder input and scientific information. [Example: *We will pursue the recovery of Summer Chum and Chinook in our watershed.*]
2. Determine which population viability characteristics (PVCs = abundance, productivity, diversity, and spatial distribution) are preventing/slowing the recovery of your priority stock(s). This is a scientific endeavor. Scientific information will dictate which PVCs need improvement in order to achieve the recovery of your priority stock(s). [Example: *The abundance of Summer Chum is low in our watershed, and the productivity of Chinook is very poor in our watershed.*]
3. Determine which habitat feature(s) and/or watershed processes are responsible for the poor PVCs you identified in step 2 above. This is a scientific endeavor. [Example: *The abundance of Summer Chum is low in our watershed because of high temperatures. The productivity of Chinook is very poor in our watershed because of high rates of sedimentation.*]
4. Armed with knowledge about the habitat feature(s) and/or watershed processes that you identified in step 3 above, attempt to identify the primary causes. (Some tools, such as EDT, build the "identification of causes" step into the scientific model.) This will, ultimately, lead to areas in your watershed in which to work. [Example: *The high temperatures that are limiting Summer Chum abundance in our watershed are due to the virtual elimination of riparian vegetation through the urbanized parts of X and Y subbasins. The high rates of sedimentation that are reducing the productivity of Chinook in our watershed are due to the extensive system of dirt & gravel roads in Z subbasin.*]
5. Identify all possible actions to remedy the causes you identified in step 4 above. Evaluate those possible actions and explain how you decided upon the most appropriate action to pursue. Assemble these most appropriate actions (and associated areas) into an initial "TOP TIER[2]" of priority **actions and areas** using the information generated in steps 1-4. In addition, consider…
    a. … current and potential abundance, productivity, population diversity, and population distribution

[2] Strive for a TOP TIER that contains **actions and areas** that cover a small percentage of the area in your watershed. The idea is for your TOP TIER to reflect those **actions and areas** that it is *realistic* to address over the short term (1-5 years).

b. … the potential to successfully eliminate the difference between current and potential PVCs,

c. … and the protection offered (or not offered) by current and anticipated land use regulations and practices.

*Steps 1 through 5 result in an initial TOP TIER of **actions and areas** that will provide the greatest impact towards achieving recovery of the prioritized salmon stock(s).*

6. Modify your TOP TIER of **actions and areas** considering stakeholder priorities. It may be acceptable to remove areas of high biological importance from the TOP TIER. Below are some acceptable reasons to do so. The strategy document should include a rationale for both excluding and including actions and areas in the final TOP TIER.
   a. Are there areas of medium (not low!) biological importance outside the initial TOP TIER where local stakeholder support needs to be continued or bolstered in order to eventually support salmon recovery efforts in areas of higher biological importance? If so, how long will that activity take until you move to areas of higher biological importance?
   b. Is there community resistance to restoration or acquisition work in biologically important areas requiring you to develop actions to address building community support?
   c. Are there certain actions that are supported by the community or sensitive to the community, such as a focus on water conservation efforts or preventing the loss of private property tax base through government acquisitions?

7. Develop a Table of TOP TIER of **actions and areas** (See attached example.)
   a. Identify high priority stream reaches, shoreline segments/drift cells, estuaries (on the order of a few miles) wherein you will pursue the priority actions such as preservation, restoration, or strategy development or implementation (e.g., community outreach, reach-scale assessments, feasibility studies).
   b. Provide brief justification for each action and area in your table.
   c. The Table of TOP TIER Actions should include priority actions over the short-term (1-5).
8. Create a set of project ranking criteria that will link the goals and objectives delineated in your strategy to your final, prioritized project list.

Example of TOP TIER of *Actions and Areas*

Reach	Species	Habitat Type	Recommended Action	Actions/Needs	Rationale	Comments
Salmon River (RM 1.7-3.5)	Threatened Chinook, coho, and steelhead	Spawning and Rearing	Acquisition and Restoration	Purchase floodplain area and restore connectivity to river	50% of spawning occurs in this highly productive reach.	EDT indicates that restoration could result in a 70% increase in production
Canyon Creek subbasin	Threatened Chinook, steelhead	Spawning and Rearing	Restoration	Reduce sedimentation from road-related erosion on county, private, and USFS roads.	Formerly most productive watershed for threatened chinook, but sediment from landslides and road erosion have reduced spawning by 60% over past 10 years	Professional judgement of local biologists is that sediment inputs have cemented and buried redds and filled holding pools and is limiting factor for recovery of stock.
Bear River Estuary	Threatened Chinook, coho, chum, pink, and steelhead	Rearing	Acquisition and Restoration	Purchase land at head of estuary, remove levees, and conduct restoration	The Bear River estuary supports multiple stocks of salmon, has high production potential, and is critical rearing area for threatened chinook.	Acquisition and restoration will require significant work with landowners and may take decades, but potential productivity makes this a critical area for salmon

Example of TOP TIER of *Actions and Areas*

Reach	Species	Habitat Type	Recommended Action	Actions/Needs	Rationale	Comments
Cub Creek	Threatened Chinook, coho	Rearing	Restoration	Address fish passsage problems, reconnect and restore off-channel habitat, and provide example of partnership with agricultural community.	Chinook rearing is limited in this small watershed, but potential to engage important segment of community in a lower profile settting.	Opportunity to conduct pilot project with local farmers that could be used as a template for use in areas more important to salmon recovery
Bear River A (RM 4.0-7.5)	Threatened Chinook, chum, coho, steelhead	Spawning and Rearing	Assessment	Feasibility studies and community outreach are needed to determine opportunities and costs for potential restoration	Potential for great increases in productivity for threatened chinook and other salmon, but development of options require more site-specific information	If feasibility study indicates good potential for success, acquisition and restoration of this reach should be considered a high priority
Bear River B (RM 12.1-13.8)	Threatened chinook, coho, steelhead	Spawning and Rearing	Protection	Protect floodplain and riparian corridor	Significant amount of off-channel rearing habitat in this high production stream with mature forest floodplain at risk of future development.	Fee simple acquisition is the preferred option, but conservation easements may also provide similar protection at lower cost.

Example Map of Priority *Actions and Areas*